**Astra’s Diary: Romulus and Remus**

Today was my birthday and in just one day I was almost captured by Dis, the ancient god of the underworld, traveled back in time, learned my best friend is a demi-god, saved the founders of Rome, and discovered I have this overwhelming task to basically SAVE THE WORLD in front of me. Oh yeah – and I got a new puppy! His name is Fidelis, but Tempus and I have decided it’s easier to call him Fido for short.

Did I mention that Fido is a wolf pup from the same she-wolf that nursed Romulus and Remus? Well, he is. And since Tempus and I had already traveled back to the time of their birth, there was no way I was leaving without getting to see the famous twins with my own eyes. If I’m destined with this responsibility to save the world and all that, I should at least get to do a little touristic sight-seeing with our time travel powers, right?

It didn’t take much to convince Tempus that there we had some serious historical celebrities to see, so we headed towards the palace of King of Alba Longa. Let me start at the beginning – it all goes back to the Trojan War. I don’t want to spoil too much if you haven’t heard about the Trojan Horse and all that – (Note to self: Ask Tempus if we can go visit Troy around 1250 BC so I can see Achilles and Hector in action!) Anyway, the Trojans were losing the war, and one clever Trojan prince, Aeneas escaped. (He was the son of Venus, and she warned him to get out while he still could.) Aeneas traveled all over trying to find his destiny and ended up here, in Italy, where he founded his own new kingdom of Alba Longa.

Numitor is the great-great-400-years-later-grandson of Aeneas, so now he is King of Alba Longa. He has a daughter, Rhea Silvia, so she is the princess of Alba Longa. From all my studies with my tutor, Rhea Silvia was a VERY pretty princess, which gets her into a bit of trouble later. Unfortunately, Numitor had a brother – Amulius, who was rather jealous. Check out the family tree below to help. Amulius took over the throne and to guarantee that Numitor’s descendants didn’t try to take it back, he made Rhea Silvia become a Vestal Virgin – these are priestesses to the goddess Vesta who are not allowed to marry. But since Rhea Silvia attracted the attention of the gods, and the god Mars fell in love with her. VOILA – she gave birth to twins.

Amulius found out and was so upset that he threw the twins into the Tiber River. This happens to be the day in history to which Tempus and I had traveled. We snuck along the Tiber River, and sure enough, along the opposite shore was an angry King Amulius carrying two little baby boys. He hands them to a servant and tells the servant to throw them in the river. Then I noticed something that the history scrolls had never mentioned before – it wasn’t a servant at all, but the god, Dis in disguise! Tempus explained that we could recognize Dis when other mortals couldn’t. King Amulius left and Dis threw the twins into the river, and then disappeared! Now, according to legend, the twins are *supposed* to float to shore and be nursed by a she-wolf (Fido’s mama) – but these baskets were definitely NOT floating. I looked at Tempus in a panic and he looked back at me perplexed. I dived in – thank Jove my father taught me how to swim – and caught the basket before it completely submerged in the water. Tempus helped me struggle to shore and we peered inside to find a basketful of two blissfully unaware babes and STONES. Apparently Dis had put them in the basket to make it sink. We both sat on the shore in a bit of shock for a while – we’d just saved the founders of Rome from drowning! They were *supposed* to float to shore to be raised by wolves – not by a twelve-year-old girl and a time-traveling demi-god. Tempus finally smiled and said it was lucky he knew where to find the she-wolf.

Later a shepherd would find the toddlers and raise them. And even later, they’d find out they were the rightful grandsons of Numitor and show Amulius some justice.

Just to make sure there were no more interferences by Dis, we traveled a little forward in time to April 21, 753 BC – the year that Romulus and Remus decide to found their own city – Rome. Sure enough the brothers were there – safe and sound and un-drowned. Well, at least one of them would be safe and sound that day…

I guess this is how it is supposed to go – Dis tries to mess with history and I have to put it back on track. Me, a twelve-year-old girl versus the god of death throughout all space and time - that’s not a daunting match at all. Thanks, gods, but a little guidance would be nice. I mean, the story of Romulus and Remus was easy – every Roman citizen should know how our city was founded. But what if it is something less well known? I wish I’d paid better attention to my history lessons now! I asked Tempus what he thought we should do, he said he had no idea, but maybe visiting the wisest man in the world could help…

**Exercise: Reading Comprehension Questions**

1. Romulus and Remus have two gods in their family tree.

- Who are these gods and what are they the gods of?

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* What does this tell you about the Roman people?

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2. What is the name of Numitor’s kingdom?

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3. Why did Amulius make Rhea Silvia become a Vestal Virgin?

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4. According to the legend, who/what nursed Romulus and Remus?

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5. When was the city of Rome founded?

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Bonus: Who do you think “the wisest man in the world” is whom Tempus and Astra will visit next?

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